

# OPEN SPACE & RECREATION



*Aeropen Media*

# I AMesbury 2030

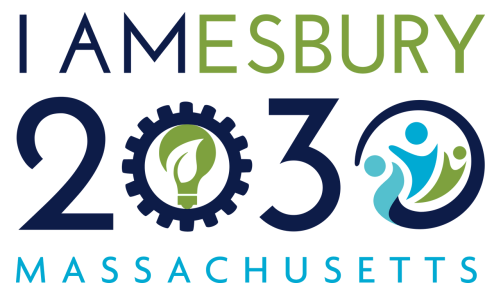
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Mayor Kassandra Gove created the I AMesbury 2030 Task Force to help our community plan for the future. This group is spending two years (2021-2022) gathering community feedback, evaluating our strengths and weaknesses and helping to determine where we collectively want Amesbury to be in the next 10 years.

I AMesbury 2030 is looking at every aspect of our community to make sure that we're moving forward with one vision. They are looking at eight elements: open space and recreation, learning, arts and culture, mobility, infrastructure, economic development, housing, and operations. They are considering each of these elements with three lenses top of mind: equity, health, and resilience / sustainability. These three key areas are an important consideration to incorporate into every aspect of the 2030 plan.

As the Task Force completes an element, they release a short document to share some background, research and goals. These short documents reflect the work and findings that will be found in the complete, comprehensive document, which will be released at the end of this process in 2023.

**We hope this document sheds light on the work of the Task Force, with the understanding that this document will not have all the answers. We look forward to sharing the full, comprehensive plan with you in 2023!**



## **I AMesbury 2030 Task Force**

Mary Chatigny, Co-Chair

Brittany Steingesser, Co-Chair

Peter Frey

Peggy Green

Ann McKay

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Michael Woo



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**Amesbury's open spaces and recreation areas have always been a priority for our community. At one time in our history Amesbury was heavily a farming community, and since then farmland has turned into conservation land with trails and recreation spaces.**

Our open spaces and recreation areas include sports fields, trails, conservation areas, waterways and beaches, playgrounds, event spaces and more. Our recreation areas are used for passive recreation (walking, bicycling) and active recreation (team sports, organized activities) by individuals, families, leagues and more. While many of our spaces are able to be used 24/7/365 no matter the season, other areas are underutilized in different seasons, limiting people's access to recreational spaces and activities. Several of our recreational spaces are poorly maintained, also limiting people's ability to properly utilize these spaces.

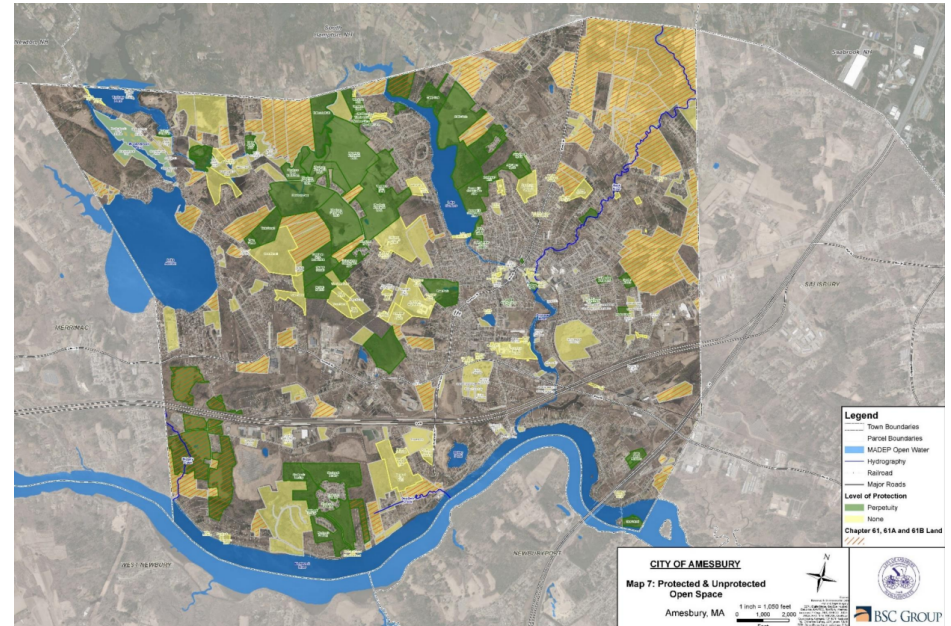
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**93%**

**In a March 2021 community survey about Amesbury's Identity, more than 93% of respondents said that "Amesbury's open spaces and natural resources are vitally important to our community, and play a large role in why I chose to live here and/or what I enjoy about living here."**



The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) says that park access is measured in terms of the percentage of residents in a community living within a half-mile or 10-minute walk of a park.

The NRPA and Cooperative Extension Service standards suggest that a community should have 43 acres of recreational open space per 1,000 people. In Amesbury, this means having 731 acres of recreational space. As of 2021, Amesbury has more than 800 acres of recreation and conservation space.



**"The quality and volume of open spaces is one of the large reasons why my husband and I moved up here from the city, and it's vital that we protect them!"**  
**- 2021 community survey respondent, District 3**







## Our Vision for Open Space & Recreation

The City of Amesbury is fortunate to balance its urban setting with its wealth of open spaces, parks, fields, and other natural resources that encourage intergenerational recreation. We must prioritize management and funding to sustain these spaces for the future benefit of everyone. The City's budget, staff and goals must work together to support our open space and recreation areas, ensuring all residents the opportunity to live a healthy and active lifestyle.

## **GOAL:** Ensure that information about Amesbury's open spaces, parks, fields and natural resources is easy to find and navigate.

We heard from many residents that reliable information about our recreation and open spaces is difficult to find, both in person and online. By 2030 we will make sure that information is easy to find and access, and that our natural resources are being promoted to residents and visitors.



### **Some action items to help us achieve this goal will include:**

- Refine job responsibilities and reporting structures to establish City-wide ownership over management and maintenance of spaces.
- Centralize reservation systems for City and School open spaces and recreation areas.
- Make contact information for management and facility maintenance needs clear and accessible to users.
- Create tutorials and trainings about how to reserve and use the spaces, communicate and make accessible to stakeholders.



## **GOAL:** Plan for the long-term operation and maintenance of our open spaces and recreational areas.



# 49%

In an August 2021 community survey about Amesbury's recreation spaces, 49% of respondents said that they Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed that Amesbury's recreation facilities are safe and well-maintained year-round.

### **Some action items to help us achieve this goal will include:**

- Outline or establish who is responsible for care and custody of each area at the time of adoption or acceptance.
- Require maintenance and operations plans for all spaces at the time of adoption or within 60 days with consideration of long-term costs, and expedite plans for existing spaces.
- Consider the implementation of user fees and sponsorships as alternative funding to sustain maintenance of these spaces.
- Explore possibilities to centralize all maintenance and management for outdoor spaces.
- Conduct a feasibility study to determine which spaces have potential for year-round use.

**GOAL:** Regularly assess the recreation needs of our residents to ensure equity for all.

50/50



In an August 2021 community survey about Amesbury's recreation spaces, respondents were split roughly 50/50 about whether Amesbury's recreation activities and facilities are designed and built to be universally accessible to residents and visitors of all ages, abilities and interests.

**Some action items to help us achieve this goal will include:**

- Establish a professional practice of tracking demographics of current users and the spaces they're using.
- Use demographic information to inform decisions for future use and programming.
- Evaluate all spaces for ADA accessibility and develop an Accessibility Score to be included on the City's website for each space.
- Expand printed and digital communications about open spaces and recreation areas to meet multiple languages and literacy needs.



## **GOAL:** Proactively plan for climate resilience in our open spaces and recreation areas.

US Climate Data\* estimates that we will see a 3.34 degree average temperature increase by 2030. With this increase, Amesbury will experience 5 more days over 90 degrees Fahrenheit and 13 fewer days under 32 degrees Fahrenheit. Climate change is impacting Amesbury in multiple ways including increasing flooding, extreme weather, coastal storm surge, and drought. These challenges affect people, infrastructure, and the environment.

\*www.usclimatedata.com, included in 2020-2027 Open Space & Recreation Plan



### **Some action items to help us achieve this goal will include:**

- Identify spaces and areas that are most at risk of experiencing climate change impacts as high priority spaces.
- Operation and maintenance plans will include climate resilient initiatives for these high priority spaces.
- Address water quality in all lakes and waterways, and update maintenance plans of watershed areas.
- Encourage the use of electric maintenance equipment in our open spaces.

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## Resources and Existing Plans

- [2004 Master Plan](#)
- [2005 Essex County Landscape Inventory, Amesbury, MA](#)
- [2013 Waterbody Assessment](#)
- [2018 Community Resilience Building Summary](#)
- [2019 Public Sports Fields Master Plan](#)
- [2020 Open Space & Recreation Plan](#)

## Community Input

- [2021 Community Survey on Amesbury's Identity](#) - 413 respondents
- [2021 Open Space & Recreation Summit](#) - 33 participants from 22 organizations
- [2021 Community Survey on Open Space & Recreation](#) - 261 respondents

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